

Smoke Detectors Save Lives

The majority of fatal home fires occur at night when people are asleep. Instead of waking you, smoke and poisonous gases from a fire can quickly numb the senses and put you into an even deeper sleep.

Your chance of dying in a home fire is cut nearly in half if you have smoke detectors to alert you to a fire. Smoke detectors (also called smoke alarms) save so many lives that most states have laws requiring them in private homes.

About 86% of American homes have smoke detectors today, but that still leaves one home in seven unprotected!

And here's an alarming fact: One third of the smoke detectors in American homes aren't working! And many homes that do have a smoke detector still don't have enough to be properly protected!



Smoke detectors can save even more lives if we install them everywhere they are needed and if we keep them working.

Look for the "Laboratory-Approved" Label

Several types of detectors are available in hardware department and discount stores. Be sure that the smoke detectors you buy bear the label of approval from an independent testing laboratory. Whether they run on batteries or household current, whether they use ionization or photoelectric sensors, approved smoke detectors will offer adequate protection if they are installed and maintained properly.

Get All the Protection You Need

Minimum protection requires a smoke detector outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement. On floors without bedrooms, detectors should be installed in or near living areas such as dens, living rooms, or family rooms.

Can everyone in your home hear your smoke detector alarms even with bedroom doors closed? If not, or if any residents are hearing impaired, install additional detectors inside the bedrooms. For the hearing impaired, smoke detectors are also available that are wired to high intensity strobes that flash.

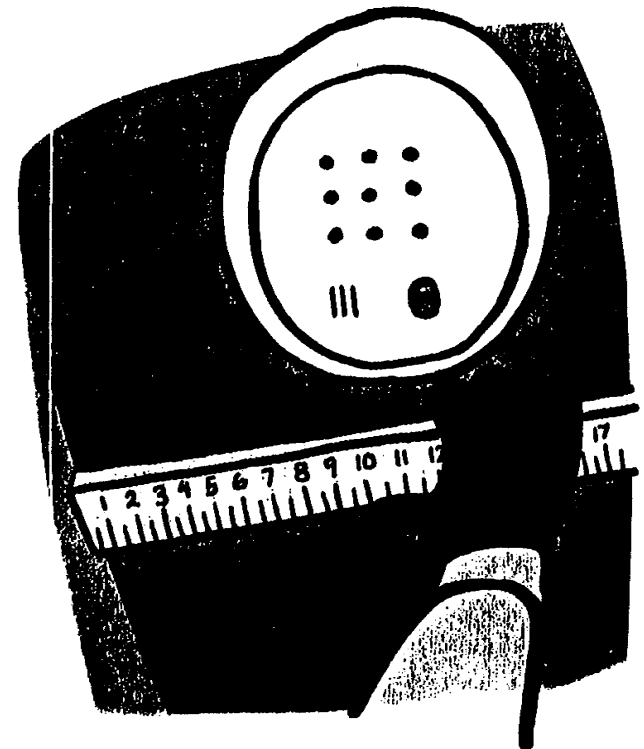
For extra protection, NFPA suggests installing smoke detectors in dining rooms, furnace rooms, utility rooms, and hallways, but not in kitchens, bathrooms, garages, or unheated spaces where cooking fumes, steam, or exhaust might cause false alarms.

Place Detectors Properly

Because smoke rises, mount detectors high on a wall or on the ceiling. A wall-mounted unit should be 4 to 12 inches from the ceiling. A ceiling-mounted detector should be at least 4 inches from the nearest wall. In a room with a pitched ceiling, mount the detector on or near the ceiling's highest point.

In open stairways with no doors at the top or bottom, position smoke detectors anywhere in the path of smoke moving up the stairs. But always position smoke detectors at the *bottom* of enclosed stairways, such as those leading to the basement, because dead air trapped near the door at the top of the stairway could prevent smoke from reaching the detector.

Keep detectors away from windows, doors, or forced air registers where drafts could interfere with the detector's operation.



Follow Instructions

Follow the manufacturer's installation instructions. Plug in detectors must have restraining devices so that their plugs cannot be accidentally pulled from their outlets. Detectors can also be hard wired into the electrical system. But never connect a detector to a circuit that can be turned off at a wall switch.

Test Your Detector!

Following the manufacturer's instructions, test your smoke detectors every week. Remember, only a *working* smoke detector can protect you. Keep yours operating!

Don't disable your smoke detector by borrowing batteries for other uses. Install new batteries at least once a year on a day that's easy to remember year after year: your birthday, a holiday, or the spring or fall time change. Many battery-powered units chirp or give some other audible signal when their batteries need replacement.

Clean your smoke detectors. Dust and cobwebs can reduce their sensitivity to smoke. For the same reason, never paint a smoke detector.

When the Smoke Detector Sounds . . .

Smoke detectors give you time to escape from a fire. But if you awake to the alarm, will you know what to do?

How your family responds in a fire depends on how well you've prepared.

Plan escape routes in advance and know at least two ways out of each room—especially bedrooms. Your plan should specify a safe meeting place outside your home so that you'll know whether everyone is out.

Practice your escape plan at least twice a year. At the same time, have everyone practice these two survival techniques:

Crawl Low under Smoke. If you must escape through smoke, get down on your hands and knees and crawl under the smoke to the nearest safe exit. Smoke and poisonous gases rise, so the air near the floor is cleaner.

Stop, Drop, & Roll. If your clothes catch fire, do not run. Stop where you are, drop to the ground, covering your face with your hands, and roll over and over to smother the flames.

Once You're Out, Stay Out

If fire strikes, leave the building immediately. Go to the designated meeting place, then call the fire department from a neighbor's phone. Do not go back into your home for any reason.



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